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A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Mr. WORTHY AND *JOHN SIMPLE,*

ON

SOME MATTERS

RELATIVE TO THE

PRESENT STATE

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

1792.

Worthy. NEIGHBOUR Simple, I am glad to ſee you; how have you done ſince I ſaw you laſt?

Simple. I thank you, Sir, very well as to my health; but I have been a great deal perplexed about the affairs of the nation. Every body is talking about it, and I ſhould think they underſtood it, but that no two of them are of the ſame mind about it. Now, as I know you are an underſtanding man, I am come for you to tell me how it is.

W. Why, Neighbour, to ſpeak truly, though I have formed a general opinion upon the ſubject, there are many parts of it which I will not pretend to have weighed with that niceneſs which is neceſſary to the full underſtanding of them; and of thoſe that I *do* know, it would require a great deal of time to give you but a very imperfect repreſentation of them.

S. Indeed! why this ſeems ſtrange, when my wife's ſtay-maker t'other night made out the whole matter in a trice, to more than a dozen people, at the ſign of the Wolf in Sheep's Cloathing; and they all agreed it was as he ſaid.

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W. Pray, what *did* he *ſay?*

S. We went *two* nights; and the firſt night, I remember, he told us, that all bloody tyrants were to come down, that the proud were to be made humble, and that the poor were to live like gentlemen. I never was ſo pleaſed in all my life. I ſaid to my wife, when I got home, that we ſhould ſoon have every thing juſt as we could wiſh; and I gave her money to buy the pink ſkirt which ſhe had been teazing me about that day for our little girl.

W. And pray what did he ſay the ſecond night?

S. He ſaid, that we never ſhould be gentlemen while the great folks had the rule; that we had no occaſion for Lords, nor for a King at all, and that all Kings were tyrants. Oh dear! thought I, that's a lie, I am ſure; for every body loves our own king; and I remembered that I had often heard you call him "the Father of his People." I had a good mind to have gone out of the houſe directly; but I thought that, if there was a chance of being a gentleman, I might as well be in the way for it; beſides, I could not but think, that though he was miſtaken in that about the King, yet, as he intended to make us better off, he muſt be a good ſort of a man.

W. And was this all that he ſaid?

S. No; he ſaid that we muſt ſign our names, to be ready to aſſiſt in this buſineſs at a proper time, which he would inform us of.

W. And *did* you ſign your name?

S. I made my mark; but, to tell truth, I didn't know well what to do, till I ſaw ſome people better dreſt than myſelf put their names down, and then I thought I might do it ſafely enough; but, ſomehow or other, I have never been eaſy ſince. I never could forgive the man for what he ſaid about our King; and I wanted to ſee you above all things, to aſk you about it; indeed, I have aſked almoſt every body that came in my way, and, as I ſaid before, ſome ſaid one thing, and ſome ſaid another; but what ſurprizes me very

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much is, that every body is confident that he is right; and yet you, who I am ſure know more than all of them put together, ſay that you have not ſufficiently conſidered every part of it yourſelf.

W. Neighbour, it is no uncommon thing for perſons to talk of what they don't underſtand. But you will think it ſtrange when I tell you that the difficulty of underſtanding it is the very cauſe of the violence with which each maintains his opinion. Men in this caſe are like a number of perſons, by ſome miſtake, got into the midſt of a wood, and each one contends that he is the neareſt out of it, with a confidence proportioned to the impoſſibility there is that the reſt of the company ſhould detect him.

S. Indeed! Sir; I wiſh I could get out of this wood. I have heard ſo much in different ways, that I am quite in a miz-maze. I love my King; and I thought myſelf very happy: but yet I could like to be a gentleman. I remember the ſtay-maker ſaid, that the great folks above us had *ſtole* the power they had, and that thoſe that really *ought* to govern were ſuch people as myſelf and the reſt of the company. Pray, Sir, tell me what you think of that?

W. Why, Neighbour, would it not be miſ-ſpending our time in conſidering this queſtion of *right*, when you ſeem to have made it out clearly that you are incapable. If the government was to be committed to the lower order of the people, either they muſt make themſelves maſters of the ſcience, which, as it is acknowledged to be the moſt difficult of any, would be impoſſible; or elſe one of two things muſt take place; they muſt either decide of themſelves, and then it would be a *blind* government; or they muſt be directed by *others*, in which caſe the governors would be *governed themſelves*.

S. Well, but ſomehow, I cannot but think that the ſtaymaker is a good ſort of a man, becauſe he is ſo great a friend to the poor.

W. Men do not uſually conclude that others are good and honeſt merely becauſe they ſay ſo; nay, it has been thought a good rule, rather to ſuſpect a man who makes extraordinary profeſſions of friendſhip to us. Pray what character has this ſtaymaker in the neighbourhood?

S. Why, now I recollect, I don't think he has the beſt word in the world among his neighbours. Some ſay he has two wives; ſome that he was a ſort of ſwindler before he came there; and ſome ſay, that, being a broken merchant himſelf, he only wants to raiſe a diſturbance, having nothing to loſe, and hoping he might get ſomething by the ſcramble: but then, my next-door neighbour, who is a great crony of his, ſays, what ſignifies a man's private character, if he is a great friend to the public?

W. Nothing is more certain than this maxim, that *a good man is a good man every where, and on every occaſion.* There is a bare poſſibility that a man may do a ſervice to the public who is a bad man in private life. But, is ſuch a man to be *truſted?* As ſoon would I take a note of hand from a notorious cheat, on the ground that there is a *poſſibility* he may pay it.

S. I am ſure, whatever is ſaid againſt him, he is one of the prettieſt-ſpoken men in the world; and ſaid, every thing he did was for the good of others, and that he did not care for himſelf at all.

W. You are yourſelf an inſtance of the great diſficulty there is to eradicate an impreſſion once ſtrongly made upon the mind. I have been expoſing the fallacy of reaſoning upon what a man *ſays of himſelf*; and yet you are recalling this very thing, to reinſtate him in your good opinion. But I hope you don't call that a pretty part of his ſpeech that tended to make you ungrateful to your King. Pray now, if you was to over-hear a perſon talking to your children—perſuading them that the reſtraints you had laid them under were unreaſonable, and adviſing them to take upon them to be their own maſters, propoſing to them

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to leave your houſe, and walk with him into the fields; if he was to give them ever ſo many ſugar-plumbs, you would not be able, with all your candour, to get the notion of a kidnapper out of your mind.

S. Well, but indeed he did tell us of a great many things that were wrong in the management of our rich men; and I really thought I ſaw it myſelf when he mentioned it.

W. There never was, nor ever will be, any ſociety on earth without imperfections, becauſe it muſt be made up of men imperfect in their nature. Pray, who was he you was conducting along yeſterday, with your conſtable's ſtaff in your hand?

S. I was carrying him to the juſtice; he was what they call a bullock-hunter, there was a great mob of them. I wiſh I could have taken them all; for they had hunted the poor beaſt about all the day, till he was quite mad, and had toſt a poor woman, with a child, juſt at the corner of our ſtreet.

W. Ah, friend, to do wrong, I ſee, is not confined to the rich; every claſs of men ought to plead guilty to this charge; but an important part of the evil is, that, though men are quick-ſighted enough in the caſe of *others* faults, they are wilfully blind to their *own*. The author of the book the ſtaymaker read a part of to you delivers this as an undeniable maxim: "That which is originally wrong, no amendment can make it right." But he did not ſee, or did not *chuſe* to ſee, that this maxim deſtroys the whole reaſoning of his book. The thing that is originally wrong is *Human-nature*; and none of his propoſed amendments can make it right.

S. But the book ſeemed to contain a very good ſcheme, if it could once be brought to bear.

W. I was early taught to be cautious of ſchemers, and I ſincerely wiſh that I had been more governed by the maxim. I ſhall never forget our moving out of that fine old manſion which my grandfather left us; never was a nobler building, nor one more conveni-

ent. It was the opinion, not of the family only, but of every architect who had contemplated it (and many came from abroad to ſurvey it), that it was the moſt perfect model poſſible. If there had been any faults, either they were rectified, or we, by being accuſtomed to them, never felt them. Unluckily a man came to live in our neighbourhood, who profeſt himſelf an architect; and, being an artful perſon, he inſinuated himſelf into our family; and it was not long before he began to find fault with our houſe. At firſt we did not give the leaſt heed to what he ſaid, feeling ourſelves comfortable as we did; but, as he flouriſhed away with many terms of art which we did not underſtand, he made us think he knew more about building than we did; ſo that in time we gave up our judgment to him, and at laſt he put us quite out of conceit of it.

S. Well, I do wonder at that; for it was a mortal fine houſe.

W. You do not know the wonderful influence of the ſame propoſition being preſented to the mind continually, eſpecially if done with great confidence; of which, I aſſure you, this gentleman was not at all deficient. *This* thing was wrongly conſtructed, *that* was badly made; in ſhort, we were at laſt perſuaded that the houſe had ſcarcely a good property belonging to it; and, moreover, he told us, that the money which it coſt to keep it in repair would be more than ſufficient to build a new houſe. One day he brought us the prettieſt deſign of a houſe I thiuk I ever ſaw; the plan ſeemed a good one, and the drawing was as well done as could be. I think I never ſaw a houſe *actually built* that ever charmed me ſo much as this *picture*; and, to advance its merit, he told us that he was building one upon the ſame plan for the great Citizen *François*, about twenty-one miles off, on the other ſide of the water. Well, nothing further was wanting to perſuade all the family, except my father and our ſteward, to eſpouſe the propoſal for a new houſe;

and

and nothing they could ſay ſeemed to have any weight with us except one, and that I thought would have overſet the whole buſineſs for that time at leaſt.

S. Pray, what was that?

W. Why, they ſaid that, as there was a houſe building upon the ſame plan, at any rate we had better wait till that was compleated, and then we ſhould be better able to judge of the merit of it.

S. That was a knocking-down argument, to be ſure; but what could you ſay to it?

W. We were all confounded at firſt; but, to ſay the truth, we had got the thing into our heads, and we did not chooſe to give it up. What we wanted in argument, we made up in clamour; and the *picture*, the *picture*, that carried every thing; in ſhort, we never quitted the point, till the new-houſe-ſcheme was adopted.

S. You certainly was a little too haſty.

W. Too haſty indeed. Why, we never conſidered what we were to do while the new houſe was building; for it was a neceſſary part of the plan that the materials of the *old* houſe were to ſerve for the *new*. We had all nearly periſhed; and one day they took away ſo many timbers, &c. that the thieves got in in the night, and ſtript us of ſo much of our property, that we have never recovered our loſs to this day.

S. That was a misfortune, to be ſure.

W. Ay, but it was not the only one; for, by the pulling down the old houſe, we were obliged to go into the new one while every thing was green and unſeaſoned; every one of us got a terrible cold, and three of my brothers died.

S. There is nothing worſe than wet walls.

W. I ſhould tire you with relating all our misfortunes. We had been but a little while in the houſe before we found every part of it giving way. The man had put no bond-timber in it, and the key-ſtone of the great arch was entirely omitted. He had found

fault

fault with our old houſe, becauſe, he ſaid, it was too high for its baſe; now the new houſe covered a great quantity of ground, but, through the inequality of it (though his great boaſt was, that he could make it equal), the houſe ſettled in ſome parts more than in others; and one night we were awaked with ſuch a violent crack, that we were glad to run out into the ſtreet, and none of us would ever venture into the houſe again. And now, friend, I leave you to judge, whether I am ever likely to be taken in with the *fineſt drawing in the world.*

S. Oh, dear ſir, I am frightened. I think I underſtand your meaning pretty well, and muſt confeſs it is very true; but, indeed, I very much wonder that your good ſenſe did not ſhew you how much better it would have been to have ſtaid till Mr. Frank's houſe had been built, that you might have ſeen how it anſwered.

W. I am ſorry to be obliged to confeſs to you, that when once a man's imagination is heated, and he is ſet upon a thing, all the uſe he makes of his ſuperior abilities is to find out arguments to juſtify the humour he is in; not to ſet himſelf right, but to perſuade himſelf and others that he *is* ſo.

S. Your ſtory has brought to my mind a circumſtance that happened when I was a ſervant in the country. A very learned gentleman perſuaded my maſter to remove an oak that had ſtood, they ſaid, for ſome hundred years upon the top of Europa hill; it was the admiration of travellers; and a nobler tree I never ſaw. Our gardener was point-blank againſt its being removed; but the gentleman had ſo much to ſay, that my maſter conſented; for he thought that the Philoſopher muſt know beſt; and ſo we ſhould all have thought if the tree had not DIED. Good day to you, Sir. I am much obliged to you for your diſcourſe. You may be ſure I ſhan't go to the Wolf in Sheep's Cloathing again.